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FM AMEMBASSY SANTO DOMINGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8685
INFO RUEHZA/WHA CENTRAL AMERICAN COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHWN/AMEMBASSY BRIDGETOWN PRIORITY 2073
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0781
RUEHG/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN PRIORITY 0981
RUEHKG/AMEMBASSY KINGSTON PRIORITY 2759
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO PRIORITY 1115
RUEHPU/AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE PRIORITY 4645
RUEHSP/AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY 1819
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC PRIORITY
RUCPDOC/USDOC WASHDC PRIORITY 1673
RUCOWCV/CUSTOMS CARIBBEAN ATTACHE MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEFHLC/HQS DHS WASHDC PRIORITY
RUMISTA/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SANTO DOMINGO 001623

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STATE FOR WHA, WHA/CAR, INR/IAA; USSOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD;
TREASURY FOR OASIA-JLEVINE; DEPT PASS USDA FOR FAS; USDOC
FOR 4322/ITA/MAC/WH/CARIBBEAN BASIN DIVISION; USDOC FOR
3134/ITA/USFCS/RD/WH; DHS FOR CIS-CARLOS ITURREGUI

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/05/2017

TAGS: PREL PHUM ELAB DR

SUBJECT: ACTIONS OF DOMINICAN CONSUL-GENERAL IN MIAMI

REF: A. SEARBY E-MAIL 6/29/07 5:07 PM

¶B. SANTO DOMINGO 0732

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Rolland W. Bullen, Reasons 1.4(b), (d)

¶1. (U) This is an action request. Please see para. 6.

¶2. (C) Embassy Santo Domingo is concerned about the apparent inappropriate behavior of Dominican Consul-General Manuel Almanzar Castillo at a June 27 public screening of the film "Sugar Babies," a production which is critical of the working conditions of sugarcane cutters in the Dominican Republic.

¶3. (C) The screening of "Sugar Babies" was held at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami and was to be followed by a discussion panel moderated by Richard Tardanico. Per ref A, as the question and answer period was beginning, "Castillo ran up to the front, grabbed the open microphone, and proceeded to denounce the film. Mr. Tardanico asked Mr. Castillo to sit down and wait his turn, but Mr. Castillo refused.... Shouting and bedlam ensued and many people rushed the stage (note: Castillo was accompanied by a number of other Dominicans critical of the film). At some point, two security guards removed the microphone from Mr. Castillo."

¶4. (C) The Embassy believes that the Dominican Consul-General may have organized a group of protesters with the goal of deliberately disrupting a public event in the United States critical of Dominican business practices. The Embassy is particularly concerned that the behavior of the Dominican diplomat required the intervention of FIU security personnel.

¶5. (C) The Embassy views the June 27 events at FIU in the context of other Dominican attempts to harass and otherwise impede the legitimate work of domestic and international nongovernmental organizations carrying out efforts to

investigate and publicize the poor working conditions of sugarcane cutters in the Dominican Republic. To cite only one prominent example, in March, an investigation by staff at the Central Elections Board (JCE) recommended that the authorities strip the citizenship of Sonia Pierre, a prominent advocate for the rights of persons of Haitian descent, including sugarcane cutters. JCE President Castanos Guzman quickly distanced the Board from its staff's investigation; however, the events remained troubling to the Embassy, compelling former Ambassador Hertell to state to the Board our concern that the investigation may have been a case of political retribution against Pierre (ref B).

¶6. (C) Action request: Embassy proposes below the text of a draft diplomatic note to be sent by the Department to the Dominican Embassy. The Embassy believes that Castillo's behavior was highly inappropriate, just as it would be unacceptable for a U.S. diplomat to stage a disruptive public protest in the Dominican Republic. It does not appear that Castillo broke any laws. Therefore, our objective is to deliver an appropriate protest that puts Dominican diplomats on notice that behavior of this kind is unacceptable and that the Department is following these events closely. The Embassy recommends that the note be delivered in Washington instead of Santo Domingo because Castillo is serving in the United States and his actions took place there.

¶7. (U) Begin diplomatic note.

The Department of State presents its compliments to the Embassy of the Dominican Republic and has the honor to refer to the June 27, 2007 public screening of the film "Sugar Babies" at Florida International University (FIU) in Miami.

The Department of State understands that on June 27 the Dominican Consul General in Miami, Manuel Almanzar Castillo, attended a question-and-answer session that followed the screening of the film and that his behavior required the intervention of FIU security personnel.

The United States authorities emphasize their support for the public discussion of controversial topics and for the full airing of all points of view. However, accounts of the event from participants and in the press indicate that the Consul General's tone and behavior did not correspond to those expected of an individual accredited by the United States as a diplomatic representative of a foreign government.

The Department of State avails itself of the opportunity to express to the Ambassador the renewed assurance its highest consideration.

The Department of State,
Washington, (date)

(U) This report and extensive other material can be consulted on our SIPRNET site,
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/>
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